OFFICEOF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
GENEVA

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Highlights in the resettlement field in 1969

Africa

1. Following the missions to Addis Ababa of Mr. Woodward and Mrs. Toscani in April and July respectively, the OAU Bureau was assisted in setting up a sound administrative structure, which permitted it to launch into operations in Autumn 1969.

2. Intensive efforts led to the settlement in the United Kingdom of 25 African refugees, with the very effective help of the London Branch Office. Eight persons were admitted to Sweden, 5 to Italy, 4 to the U.S.A., 3 to Norway, and one each to Canada, France and the U.S.S.R. A Canadian selection mission from Beirut made two visits to Africa during the year and interviewed a number of refugees.

Movement of refugees from Turkey to Italy for migration processing for the U.S.A.

3. This unofficial scheme permitted the transfer of 289 refugees to Italy, of whom 95 subsequently migrated to the U.S.A. Due to the virtual exhaustion in December of the annual refugee quota for the U.S.A., the Italian authorities decided to temporarily suspend further arrivals from Turkey until the situation returns to normal. Upon resumption of movements from Turkey, the Italian authorities will be requested to place this arrangement on an official basis.

Movements of Albanians from Yugoslavia

4. In August 1969 an agreement was signed with the Pontificia Opera di Assistenza (POA) in Rome to assist Albanian refugees moved by ICEM from Yugoslavia to Italy in their processing for the U.S.A. A total of 151 persons were admitted to Italy under this project. Due to the slow-down in visa issuance for the U.S.A., this group is still in Italy.

5. Three families/11 persons departed from Yugoslavia for Australia under the sponsorship of the Australian Council of Churches, and two families/15 persons were admitted to France for family reunion.

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Haitian refugees in the Caribbean

6. At the time of Mr. Woodward's mission to the Bahamas in May, there were still 79 refugees waiting for resettlement out of the original group of 107. With the admission of 25 persons to France and 8 to Belgium, and the acceptance of 28 for Canada and 46 for the U.S.A., this operation has now been virtually completed. Following Mr. Woodward's mission, Dr. Joseph J. Morger was appointed UNHCR Correspondent in the Bahamas.

7. During the mission of Dr. Idoyaga to the Dominican Republic, the authorities drew his attention to a small group of Haitian refugees for whom countries of resettlement will have to be found. The Catholic Relief Services in Santo Domingo has been asked to prepare dossiers for an initial group of 8 refugees on the basis of which resettlement opportunities will be explored.

Cubans in Spain

8. During 1969 there was a decrease of just over 20% as compared with 1968 in the influx of Cubans which amounted to 6,976. A total of 4,537 visas were issued mainly for the U.S.A. At the end of the year there was a backlog of approximately 6,400 Cubans registered for the U.S.A. In addition the United States Government has continued to admit directly from Cuba about 4,000 Cubans monthly under the Havana/Miami airlift.

Czechoslovak situation

9. As a result of the rapid action by immigration countries both in Europe and overseas, over 33,000 Czechoslovaks have been resettled since August 1968. It is estimated that there are still some 17,000 Czechoslovak nationals outside their country of origin, mainly in Austria (over 10,000), who have not yet applied for asylum or asked for any assistance towards local integration or resettlement. Following the controls introduced during the latter part of 1969 the number of Czechoslovaks entering countries of first asylum has now dropped to very small dimensions.

Turkmenian refugees in India

10. Following negotiations with the Indian and Turkish governments, a group of 88 Turkmenians were moved to Turkey in September on an ICEM charter flight.

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Migration to the U.S.A.

11. Towards the end of the year a slow-down in departures for the U.S.A. caused by the near exhaustion of the annual quota under the Seventh Preference of the Public Law caused serious concern and aggravated the situation, particularly in Italy where there was still serious congestion in the camps. The High Commissioner intervened with the State Department during his visit to New York in November. It has now been learned that the United States authorities will apply the parole procedure in order to permit the continued admission of refugees at the rate of approximately 1,500 monthly until the end of the fiscal year 30 June 1970.

Swedish scheme

12. In response to special appeals by UNHCR and by the Austrian and Italian Governments, into which countries the refugee influx continued at a high level during 1969, the Swedish Government increased its annual quota from 1,000 to 1,500 visas. A total of 1,545 refugees were accepted by two selection missions in June and November.

Special schemes

13. a) Switzerland

Dossiers were submitted to the Swiss authorities for 9 cases/67 persons under the handicapped scheme and for 25 cases/29 persons under the institutional scheme, and 52 and 28 refugees have been admitted under these respective schemes during the year. By special arrangement with a Hungarian voluntary agency in Zürich the Swiss authorities have also accepted 22 able-bodied Hungarians from Italy for permanent settlement.

b) Belgium

An agreement was reached in April with three voluntary agencies in Belgium for the admission of a small number of handicapped refugees during 1969. Dossiers for 10 cases/12 persons have been submitted to our Brussels Office and so far for 3 persons agency sponsorship has been secured and visa authorization is awaited, whereas 5 cases/6 persons are still pending, and 2 cases/3 persons have withdrawn.

c) Special Resettlement Dossier Scheme

A review of the old and new handicapped caseloads in Europe, Middle East and Far East was made early in the year and the conclusion was reached that only a small current problem now existed. Upon our request, Dr. Schou visited Austria and Italy in September and October and examined a total of 34 cases comprising 71 persons of whom 17 persons have since migrated. Special Resettlement Dossiers will be prepared for the remaining group.

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d) Middle East

Besides 32 cases/96 persons dealt with under our normal programmes, a number of particularly complicated individual cases needing urgent settlement from U.A.R., Syria, Cyprus and the Lebanon have been successfully moved, mainly to Italy, for migration processing.

e) Far East

A detailed review of the total caseload of approximately 1,050 European refugees still in China was carried out by the Hong Kong Office early in the year. Due to the continued suspension of exit permits, it was decided to concentrate our efforts on solutions for the 16 severely handicapped refugees in the Shanghai Shelter for Indigent Foreigners, whom the Chinese authorities appear willing to release. Visas were obtained for 8 of these persons for Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Switzerland, all of whom reaching Hong Kong during the year. No headway has, however, been made with the group of over 30 refugees reported to be in the Harbin Asylum, due to the impossibility so far of obtaining any documentation concerning these persons, who are reportedly nearly all illiterate, aged or semi-mental.

14. Efforts to resettle the 21 refugees stranded in Hong Kong have continued and solutions have been found for 9 persons, of whom 3 have already departed for Denmark and Switzerland. Of the residual group 8 wish to remain in Hong Kong and 4 are in active processing for migration.

Relations with ICEM

15. Apart from daily liaison with ICEM on resettlement matters, one item of major importance was the decision taken by the last ICEM Council authorizing the Director to assist UNHCR with the movement of non-European refugees.

Resettlement projects

16. 21 projects were implemented by the Section in 1969. Of the total allocation of $ 311,800, $ 311,420.74 had been committed by the end of the year.

Missions

17. Mr. Woodward went on mission to Ethiopia in April, to the Bahamas in May, and to Austria in November. Mrs. Toscani spent the month of July in Addis Ababa to assist the BPEAR.

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Staffing

18. The Section lost one of its three professional officers with the departure of Mr. McPhail in June. Mrs. Zusli was recruited in October last to assist with the greatly increased workload caused mainly by individual African cases. The work performed on individual cases in this Section is in fact considerable and is growing steadily, as indicated by the fact that the figure of 40 letters despatched in January 1969 rose to 133 in December, and the total for the year amounted to 1,152 on individual cases alone.